

Communication Strategy

APPENDIX C

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this communication strategy is to summarize how the Tacoma Smelter Plume project team intends to manage and communicate Soil Safety Program content and key messages to audiences and stakeholders. To increase success, representatives of key audiences and stakeholders have provided input on this strategy and will continue to provide feedback during program implementation.

The project team will evaluate and modify this strategy as the program evolves, and use this strategy as a touchstone to ensure cohesive and clear communication when developing new materials or making program changes.

BACKGROUND

The legislature passed a law (Chapter 70.140 RCW) in 2005 to reduce children's exposure to soil with area-wide arsenic and lead contamination. The law directs Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) to:

- Work with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Department of Health (DOH), the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and local health departments;
- Test soils at schools and childcares within the Tacoma Smelter Plume; and
- Encourage actions that reduce exposure of children to smelter arsenic and lead.

Ecology is working with Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC) and the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department (TPCHD) to implement this law. Ecology provides grants to the health departments to conduct activities related to the Tacoma Smelter Plume, including sampling soil at schools and childcares, providing education and outreach, and assisting in the implementation of actions that reduce contact with arsenic and lead.

The health departments, DSHS, DOH, OSPI, public and private schools, childcare advocacy groups and support organizations, childcare provider union, and individual childcare providers have provided input to this communication strategy. Ecology solicited input primarily through four meetings.

Ecology convened two meetings of stakeholders in November (schools) and December (childcares) 2005 to review soil contamination materials for both statewide distribution and the Tacoma Smelter Plume. Based on these meetings, Ecology determined there was a high level of stakeholder interest in the Soil Safety Program design, and periodically convening an ad hoc stakeholders' review group would be advantageous for designing and implementing a program that met the audiences' needs. Ecology also determined that they should develop materials specific for the program – separate from statewide materials.

Ecology convened a communication strategy team meeting on March 8, 2006 and another stakeholders' meeting on March 29, 2006 to get feedback on the draft program design and materials, including a general communication approach.

The input received at these four meetings greatly influenced the program's design and this communication strategy.

OBJECTIVES

This communication strategy is designed to meet three key objectives:

- Create a cohesive, engaging and positive image of the Soil Safety Program and program partners, resulting in a high level of voluntary participation among target audiences.
- Coordinate messages and marketing among the program partners and stakeholders, especially among Ecology and the health departments, so that schools and childcares understand the program and can easily participate.
- Keep stakeholders well informed and involved throughout the life of the program, relying on their expertise and experience in the development and use of communication tools and in program evaluation.

MODIFICATIONS AND UPDATES

Ecology will need to update this communication strategy to reflect lessons learned through program implementation. During program implementation, it will be important for the project team to keep each other and stakeholders informed of changes prior to changes taking effect.

An important role of stakeholders is to provide feedback to Ecology about how well the program is accepted and implemented by schools and childcares – and how to improve the program. Ecology will invite stakeholders to periodically review and comment on new program elements or materials, and to hear program results tracked through the database.

Specifically, Ecology will convene a meeting of stakeholders in November 2006 to review program results to that point, and to advise Ecology on any beneficial modifications to the program

prior to Ecology's December 2006 report to the legislature. Ecology will update the communication strategy in January 2007 to reflect lessons learned and input from stakeholders and the legislature.

AUDIENCE AND STAKEHOLDER PROFILE

There are many audiences and stakeholders with an interest in the health and safety of children. The Soil Safety Program's two main audience categories are schools and childcares – including children and their families. Key program stakeholders are those agencies, groups, organizations, and associations responsible or concerned for children's health and safety at schools and childcares. Table 1 contains the Soil Safety Program's audiences and stakeholders.

TABLE 1
SOIL SAFETY PROGRAM AUDIENCES AND STAKEHOLDERS

Audiences

Schools

Primary

- School district superintendents
- School facility managers
- School risk managers
- School operations and maintenance staff
- Private school owners
- Private school board of trustees or regents
- Private school headmasters
- Public school principals

Secondary

- School Boards
- PTAs
- Teachers
- School Staff
- School Nurses
- Students
- Parents and families of students

Childcares

Primary

- Multi-location childcare owners
- Multi-location childcare operators
- Multi-location childcare facility managers
- Multi-location maintenance providers
- Single location center owners
- Single location center operators
- Home childcare owners
- Home childcare operators
- Licensed pre-schools

- Unlicensed pre-schools we know of
- Head Starts
- Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) facilities
- Property owners

Secondary

- Childcare staff
- Head Start offices (Educational Service Districts, etc.)
- Customers – parents and families, children

Stakeholders

Primary

- Our partners (DSHS/DCCEL, DOH, OSPI, Child Care Resource and Referral Network) and each other
- Agency management
- Legislature general
- Legislation sponsors
- Media – especially early childhood publications
- Supporters:
 - Public health nurses
 - Key Childcare organizations
 - The Collaborative on Health and Environment members
 - WAEYC
 - Washington Parents for Safe Childcare
 - Washington Toxics Coalition school program

Secondary

- Other childcare organizations as appropriate
- Local governments other than Health Departments
- State Agencies other than partners – CTED, L&I
- Other environmental groups as appropriate
- Parent groups

The following paragraphs contain communication considerations stakeholders shared with the project team during the four meetings held in 2005 and 2006. Ecology will convene additional stakeholder meetings throughout the life of the program to help ensure cohesive and effective communication of program content and messages.

Program Design Communication Considerations

During the meetings described above, attendees identified several issues to consider when working with schools and childcares. Most of these considerations are more about program timing and sequencing than communication, but are listed here to ensure they are recorded and available for reference.

Schools

- *Seasonal maintenance schedule is predominately summer*

Childcares

- *On-site visits by the health departments and Ecology should be convenient for the school or childcare.*
- *Be careful about creating unfair business advantage or disadvantage for childcares.*
- *Go through corporate childcare offices with notification to local operator.*
- *Ensure maintenance is low cost and minimized so soil safety actions succeed long-term.*

Schools – Communication Considerations

Public school stakeholders have urged the project team to initiate communication directly with school district superintendents. Given each district is different, this allows a superintendent to delegate responsibility as they chose; manage the communication and messages to facilities or operations managers, school boards, principals, staff, parents, school boards and students; and take a coordinated approach for multiple schools. Working through the superintendent also honors the fact that school principals are busy with academic issues and need the support of their superintendents to institute soil safety actions.

The public school stakeholders have been especially clear that working with the district superintendent on an action plan that meshes with budgets and construction plans is important to successful on-the-ground implementation of soil safety actions. Having an action plan in place or at least underway before fully engaging the school board or parents is also important, so the superintendent can present the problem and solution in tandem.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) plays a pivotal supportive role in communicating with public schools and is an official partner in the Soil Safety Program. OSPI provides guidance on school health and safety, oversees regulatory compliance, and facilitates communication among schools and school administrators. OSPI uses publications, a website, and other tools to communicate with public schools. In addition to direct communication to public school district superintendents, Ecology will work through OPSI to communicate key messages and program content to public school audiences.

Private (or independent) school stakeholders have described private schools as more individualized than public school districts. Some private schools are not part of a larger organization and the school headmaster makes decisions independently or in cooperation with a board of trustees. Some private organizations manage more than one school, and the board of trustees or regents of these organizations will likely want to have a coordinated multi-school approach and manage the communication and messages to headmasters, staff, parents, and students.

Private schools are not eligible for services provided by OSPI and have formed their own associations to serve their needs. The Pacific Northwest Independent Schools Association is the largest of these and Ecology will contact them to discuss outreach to private schools. Other associations may exist and Ecology will contact them to facilitate communication of Soil Safety Program content and messages.

Childcares – Communication Considerations

Childcares are the most diverse and complex audience category. For the purpose of the Soil Safety Program, childcares include Head Start programs, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) childcares, pre-schools, and licensed childcares.

Given this diversity, communication tools need to be flexible. Materials and information need to be appropriate for multi-location and single location childcares, large and small childcares, and a broad range of owner and operator education and cultural backgrounds. Language translations will be essential to communicate with some childcares and their customers. Ecology will translate certain materials into Spanish and Russian initially, and into other languages as appropriate. Ecology has a translation team in-house that can provide Spanish and Asian language translations, and Ecology will contract for Russian and other services as needed.

Many agencies and organizations provide support to and communicate with childcares. These agencies and organizations attended the stakeholder meetings in significant numbers. Childcare stakeholders have strongly urged the project team to use existing agencies and organizations, and existing trainings, publications, list serves, and other tools to communicate with childcares. They also strongly urged the team to work with existing agencies and organizations to publicize the program requirements and services for a few months prior to requesting access for soil sampling – as a way to gain more voluntary participation. By introducing the program through known and trusted agencies and organizations, childcares should welcome the program more than without such an introduction.

Working closely with DSHS licensors, childcare owner and operator trainers, the childcare union, and advocacy groups on overall program design and implementation should increase the long-term sustainability of soil safety actions. Soil Safety Program funding will eventually run out. Once soil safety actions are in place, childcare agencies and organizations will play a major role in ensuring soil safety actions continue into the future.

KEY MESSAGES

Summarized below are the key messages we want audiences and stakeholders to act upon and understand. These key messages reflect existing messages used for the Tacoma Smelter Plume project

during 1999 – 2006, and input from stakeholders and project team members at the Communication Strategy meeting of March 8, 2006. A question and answer piece containing most of the key messages was presented to stakeholders by Ecology on March 29. The current wording reflects feedback from these stakeholders.

1. Ecology and the health departments are partners with you in caring about the health and safety of children.
2. State agencies and organizations that care about children support the program.
3. The program provides free technical and financial assistance.
4. You are encouraged to use this free program while funding and assistance is available.
5. Ecology based the program on a new state law. The state law requires schools and childcares to provide access for soil testing.
6. If you choose not to take actions to protect children in your care, you are required to notify parents of soil sampling results. (Note: Deliver this message only to those with soil results above state standards.)
7. Ecology and the health departments will provide services at a time that is convenient for you.
8. We appreciate your participation. Ecology will acknowledge you for your participation.
9. We want to celebrate your participation with your permission. However, regardless of your permission, some information is still part of the public record.
10. We will serve areas of potential higher levels of arsenic and/or lead first, based on proximity to the Tacoma Smelter, wind patterns, and previous test results.
11. Although there are health concerns with arsenic and lead in even low amounts, the higher the amount the greater the health concern.

MARKETING THE MESSAGES

The project team and stakeholders are from a variety of agencies and organizations, and operate under various mandates and directives. This means we all have our own terminology, writing styles, logos and publication formats. To accomplish our objectives (see above), the project team will use consistent graphics, terms and taglines that invites the audiences' attention and participation in program services.

Graphics

Ecology has developed a letterhead template with the Dirt Alert logo and list of program partners (see Attachment C1). Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department (TPCHD) originally developed the logo for the Pierce County portion of the Tacoma Smelter Plume project. TPCHD has tested the logo in focus groups and used it successfully for several years. TPCHD has graciously

agreed to use of the logo plume-wide. Ecology will highlight the logo in all Soil Safety Program materials.

The program partners include Ecology, PHSKC, TPCHD, DSHS, DOH, OSPI, and the Washington Child Care Resource and Referral Network. These partners have agreed to be included on the letterhead template, which underscores the broad-based support for the program.

Ecology has retained Kick Spark Creative, LLC for Soil Safety Program graphics support. Kick Spark Creative, LLC did the original Dirt Alert logo and created the letterhead template, certificates and decal for the program. This ensures a consistent look throughout the program materials and was cost-effective, given they had already developed materials for TPCHD. Please see Appendices F2a F2b and F2c for the program's certificates and decal. Ecology will personalize certificates for each school or childcare. The health departments or Ecology will give the first certificate to all childcares that go through the site assessment, regardless if they need soil testing or not. Ecology will give the second certificate to schools and childcares once soil safety actions are in place. Ecology will prepare the certificates and decal in the appropriate language for the audience.

Glossary of Terms

Since the beginning of the Tacoma Smelter Plume project, Ecology, PHSKC, and TPCHD have operated somewhat independently regarding terminology. Ecology terminology tends to stem from state law (the Model Toxics Control Act, etc.) and recommendations of the interagency Area-wide Soil Contamination Task Force. The health departments have each developed their own terminology consistent with their own mandates and directives as they developed public outreach and education materials for their specific audiences.

In order to present an image for the Soil Safety Program that is cohesive, simple and easily understood by key audiences, we have developed a glossary of terms for program materials. All program partners will use these terms in written or verbal communication with audiences and stakeholders. These terms contribute to an easier comprehension level, and help meet the Governor's Plain Talk directive for state agencies.

SOIL SAFETY PROGRAM GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Terms used in existing materials	Soil Safety Program terms	Example sentences
Best management practices, soil safety guidelines/tips, community protection/protective measures, soil management practices, common sense actions, healthy actions	Soil safety actions	There are soil safety actions you can take to protect children in your care.
Ecology, PHSKC, TPCHD, DSHS, DOH, OSPI, and Child Care Resource and Referral Network	Program partners	The program partners are working together to make...
Ecology, PHSKC, TPCHD	Project staff, project team	The project team will work with you to make your childcare a safer place for children.
PHSKC, TPCHD	Health department(s)	The health departments will test your soil.
Reduce risk of exposure	Reduce contact	Soil safety actions can help reduce contact with arsenic and lead.
Contamination, contaminated	Pollution, polluted	Soil testing shows your soil is polluted with arsenic and lead.
Remediation, to remediate	Make safer, make healthier	Covering or reducing the amount of bare soil creates a safer play area.
Modified Expanded Footprint CUA Study Zone	Soil Safety Program service area	Your school is in the Soil Safety Program service area.
Children you are responsible for	Children in your care	Soil safety actions help provide a safer and healthier environment for children in your care.
Elevated levels	Higher levels, raised levels	The program will start in areas where higher levels of arsenic and lead are most likely.
Child use area interim action trigger levels	State standards	If the amount of lead in your soil is above state standards, Ecology will work with you to create a Soil Safety Action Plan for your school.
Institutional frameworks, institutional capabilities	Long-term solutions	The project team is working on long-term solutions to the soil pollution.
Soil concentration	Amount	If the amount of arsenic in your soil is over 20 parts per million, we will work with you to....
Area-wide soil contamination from smelters	Smelter arsenic and lead in soil	There may be smelter arsenic and lead in your soil.
Airborne emissions, smelter emissions	Air pollution	Air pollution from the smelter settled onto Vashon Island soil.
Analytical results	Soil test results	Ecology will meet with you to talk about your soil test results.
Implementation, implement	Do, carry out, put in place	Ecology can provide design help for putting soil safety actions in place.

Taglines

Taglines are catchy phrases that succinctly convey an image, idea or message. Taglines should be memorable, and repeated throughout materials to be effective.

Listed below are taglines that will be used in Soil Safety Program materials.

- Be soil smart (e.g. Be a soil smart school)
- Be alert about dirt (e.g. This childcare is alert about dirt)
- Protecting children from smelter arsenic and lead
- Protecting children – our most important resource

- Working together toward a safer and healthier environment
- Know your soil.

Soil Safety Program taglines are designed to compliment taglines in existing Tacoma Smelter Plume materials:

- Dirt Alert: Take a closer look
- Be alert in the dirt
- Dirt can hurt
- Healthy actions: Simple things to keep you safe
- Dirt Alert healthy school
- Helping families make informed choices to reduce contact with contaminated dirt and soil.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

A strategy is generally less detailed and more flexible than a communication plan – a plan contains specific dates, times, locations, presenters, etc. associated with each communication tool. This strategy provides some details on tools and associated audiences, purpose, distribution, and timing – but is more general than a plan and can be added to as the program is implemented.

Flexible communication tools are essential to communicating with such a diverse and complex array of audiences and stakeholders. To this end, this strategy includes a letterhead template that can be used to overlay text, and a certificate template. Using templates is cost effective because you can create materials as you need them, and use current information relevant to the specific audience – yet create a cohesive image for the program.

The letterhead template will be used as the framework for question and answer sheets, fact sheets, letters, and other information. The certificate template will be personalized with each school's or childcare's name and a specific set of soil safety actions, and translated into various languages as needed.

A key element of this strategy is outreach to childcares during April – August 2006. Ecology has created a resource notebook with relevant information about childcare organizations and groups that have newsletters and other communication tools available to inform childcares. In April 2006, Ecology will begin submitting newsletter articles to childcare groups for publication. Ecology staff will do additional outreach through childcare organizations as they learn more about available venues and opportunities.

To complement Ecology's outreach to childcares, Ecology is providing a \$10,000 public participation grant to the Washington Child Care Resource and Referral Network (the Network). Stakeholders have repeatedly mentioned the Network as a highly trusted and visible organization among childcares. Given this, Ecology will fund the Network to reach out to childcares, especially during the period April – August 2006. The Network also will independently assess the program. Ecology will use the results to improve program services, modify the program design, and inform the legislature in December 2006. The Network will also be eligible to compete for July 2007 – June 2009 biennium funding to continue childcare outreach and assessment.

Please see Attachment C3, Soil Safety Program Communication Tools, for details on templates and other tools. As the program progresses, Ecology will update the communication tools table periodically to reflect lessons learned. An important update will occur in fall 2006, after the childcare outreach has been underway for a few months and the first round of Soil Safety Action Plans are implemented.

TIMELINE

Please see the communications tools table for an approximate timeframe and circumstances for each tool. Please see Figure 1: Communication Strategy Timeline, for a general timeline of the first nine months of the program (April through December 2006). Ecology will update the timeline along with the rest of the strategy in January 2006.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment C1

Frequently Asked Questions about the Soil Safety Program

Attachment C2

Certificates and Decal

C2a – Soil Testing Certificate

C2b – Soil Safety Action Plan Certificate

C2c – Soil Safety Decal

Attachment C3

Soil Safety Program Communication Tools Table